

BOOKS IN THE AFTERNOON, 2016-17

July 28, 2016: Anne Tyler, *Saint Maybe*

[Many copies available, including several large print, downloadable e-book, and one CD.] Review: Although Tyler (*Breathing Lessons* ; *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*) is again writing about families--the way they cleave together in times of trouble and muddle through with stoic courage--her eminently satisfying novel breaks her familiar mold, giving us ordinary, not eccentric characters who are shaped by disastrous events into quietly heroic behavior. The Bedloes are cheerful and count their blessings, even if they are far from rich and live on a slightly seedy street in Baltimore. But when 17-year-old Ian rashly informs his older brother Dan that the latter's wife was undoubtedly pregnant before their marriage, Dan commits suicide, and Ian is left with profound guilt--especially since Dan's wife dies soon after. Asking God's forgiveness, he receives spiritual guidance at the endearingly shabby Church of the Second Chance. He drops out of college, becomes a carpenter and helps his parents care for the three orphaned children; as the years pass, that burden falls primarily on Ian's shoulders. Wondering when God will signal that his atonement can end, Ian has an epiphany: "You could never call it a penance, to have to care for those three." --*Publishers Weekly*

August 25, 2016: Judy Blume, *In the Unlikely Event*

[Many copies available on Bibliomation, including several CDs, large print, and downloadable e-books.]

An Amazon Best Book of June 2015. Review: Three planes crash in a small town in New Jersey over the course of just two short months. Sounds like the backdrop of a horror movie, or in this post 9/11 world, something more sinister. But this actually happened in Elizabeth, New Jersey in the early 1950s, when beloved children's author Judy Blume (*Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.*) was a young girl, experiencing the horror firsthand. Who, or what, was responsible—Communists? Martians? With no obvious explanation to cling to for comfort, this terrified community could only wait for something much bigger than the next shoe to drop. This is all big, mind-blowing stuff. But in her novel *In the Unlikely Event*, which like *Summer Sisters* is written for an adult audience, Blume travels back to that time and tells the more intimate stories within the larger one, to help us better comprehend the incomprehensible, and learn the lessons that are the only bright side of catastrophe. And the overarching moral, here, is to not let fear limit your possibilities. Through the various characters that inhabit this multigenerational tale, Blume beseeches us to not be afraid to get on a plane, take career risks, pursue your dreams, fall in love...After all, life is made up of unlikely events, and they "aren't all bad. There are good ones, too." --*Erin Kodicek*

September 29, 2016: Edward Rutherfurd, *New York: The Novel*

[Many copies available at Bibliomation, including large print, CD, and downloadable e-book.] Winner of the David J. Langum, Sr., Prize in American Historical Fiction; named one of the best books of the year by *The Washington Post* and “Required Reading” by the *New York Post*. Review: Edward Rutherfurd celebrates America’s greatest city in a rich, engrossing saga, weaving together tales of families rich and poor, native-born and immigrant—a cast of fictional and true characters whose fates rise and fall and rise again with the city’s fortunes. From this intimate perspective we see New York’s humble beginnings as a tiny Indian fishing village, the arrival of Dutch and British merchants, the Revolutionary War, the emergence of the city as a great trading and financial center, the convulsions of the Civil War, the excesses of the Gilded Age, the explosion of immigration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the trials of World War II, the near demise of New York in the 1970s and its roaring rebirth in the 1990s, and the attack on the World Trade Center. A stirring mix of battle, romance, family struggles, and personal triumphs, *New York: The Novel* gloriously captures the search for freedom and opportunity at the heart of our nation’s history.—Amazon.com

October 27, 2016: Jennifer Egan, *The Keep*

[Many copies available on Bibliomation, including large print and CD. Beware of another book by same name, different author.] Review: In Jennifer Egan's deliciously creepy new novel, two cousins reunite twenty years after a childhood prank gone wrong changed their lives and sent them on their separate ways. "Cousin Howie," the formerly uncool, strange, and pasty ("he looked like a guy the sun wouldn't touch") cousin has become a blond, tan, and married millionaire with a generous spirit. He invites his cousin Danny (who as an insecure teenager left him hurt and helpless in a cave for three days) to help him renovate an old castle in Germany. To reveal too much would ruin the story, just know that *The Keep* is a wonderfully weird read--a touch experimental in terms of narrative, with a hefty dose of gothic tension and mystery--balanced by an intimate and mesmerizing look at how the past haunts us in different ways. --Daphne Durham for Amazon.com

November 17, 2016: Stephen King, *11/22/63: A Novel*

[Many copies available on Bibliomation, including large print and CD.]

Review: Dallas, 11/22/63: Three shots ring out. President John F. Kennedy is dead. Life can turn on a dime—or stumble into the extraordinary, as it does for Jake Epping, a high school English teacher in a Maine town. While grading essays by his GED students, Jake reads a gruesome, enthralling piece penned by janitor Harry Dunning: fifty years ago, Harry somehow survived his father’s sledgehammer slaughter of his entire family. Jake is blown away...but an even

more bizarre secret comes to light when Jake's friend Al, owner of the local diner, enlists Jake to take over the mission that has become his obsession—to prevent the Kennedy assassination. How? By stepping through a portal in the diner's storeroom, and into the era of Ike and Elvis, of big American cars, sock hops, and cigarette smoke... Finding himself in warmhearted Jodie, Texas, Jake begins a new life. But all turns in the road lead to a troubled loner named Lee Harvey Oswald. The course of history is about to be rewritten...and become heart-stoppingly suspenseful.

December 29, 2016: Nancy Thayer, *An Island Christmas*

[Be careful; another book with the same name and different author also comes up on the search, as well as another book by this author with a different name. Twenty-five regular copies are on Bibliomation, plus large print and CD, plus editions that include two Thayer novels.]

Review: In this enchanting holiday novel from *New York Times* bestselling author Nancy Thayer, family and friends gather on Nantucket for a gorgeous winter wedding with plenty of merry surprises in store.

As Christmas draws near, Felicia returns to her family's home on the island to marry her adventurous, rugged boyfriend, Archie. Every detail is picture-perfect for a dream wedding: the snow-dusted streets, twinkling lights in the windows, a gorgeous red and white satin dress. Except a lavish ceremony is not Felicia's dream at all; it's what her mother, Jilly, wants. Jilly's also worried that her daughter's life with daredevil Archie will be all hiking and skydiving. Wondering if their handsome neighbor Steven Hardy might be a more suitable son-in-law, Jilly embarks on a secret matchmaking campaign for Felicia and the dashing stockbroker. —from Nancy Thayer's Amazon author's page

January 26, 2017: Colm Tóibín, *Brooklyn*

[Many copies listed on Bibliomation, including large print and CD. Order early, as they are very popular, especially the large print, all of which were checked out when I searched in May 2016.]

Amazon Best of the Month, May 2009, NY Times Best Seller List. Review: Committed to a quiet life in little Enniscorthy, Ireland, the industrious young Eilis Lacey reluctantly finds herself swept up in an unplanned adventure to America, engineered by the family priest and her glamorous, "ready for life" sister, Rose. Eilis's determination to embrace the spirit of the journey despite her trepidation--especially on behalf of Rose, who has sacrificed her own chance of leaving--makes a bittersweet center for *Brooklyn*. Colm Tóibín's spare portrayal of this contemplative girl is achingly lovely, and every sentence rings with truth. Readers will find themselves swept across the Atlantic with Eilis to a boarding house in Brooklyn where she painstakingly adapts to a new life, reinventing herself and

her surroundings in the letters she writes home. Just as she begins to settle in with the help of a new love, tragedy calls her home to Enniscorthy, and her separate lives suddenly and painfully merge into one. Tóibín's haunted heroine glows on the page, unforgettably and lovingly rendered, and her story reflects the lives of so many others exiled from home. --*Daphne Durham*

February 23, 2017: Tara Conklin: *The House Girl*

[Available in sufficient quantities in all formats.]

Review: The historical fiction debut by Tara Conklin is an unforgettable story of love, history, and a search for justice, set in modern-day New York and 1852 Virginia.

Weaving together the story of an escaped slave in the pre–Civil War South and a determined junior lawyer, *The House Girl* follows Lina Sparrow as she looks for an appropriate lead plaintiff in a lawsuit seeking compensation for families of slaves. In her research, she learns about Lu Anne Bell, a renowned prewar artist whose famous works might have actually been painted by her slave, Josephine.

Featuring two remarkable, unforgettable heroines, Tara Conklin's *The House Girl* is riveting and powerful, literary fiction at its very best.—from Amazon.com

March 30, 2017: Kristin Hanna, *Between Sisters*

[Available in sufficient quantities in all formats. Beware of books of similar titles by two other authors.]

A #1 New York Times Bestseller. Review: Years ago, Meghann Dontess made a terrible choice that cost her everything, including the love of her sister, Claire. Now, Meghann is a highly successful attorney who doesn't believe in intimacy—until she meets the one man who can change her mind. Claire Cavanaugh has fallen in love for the first time in her life. As her wedding day approaches, she prepares to face her strong-willed older sister. Reunited after more than two decades apart, these two women who believe they have nothing in common will try to become what they never were: a family. Tender, funny, bittersweet, and moving, *Between Sisters* skillfully explores the profound joys and sorrows shared by sisters, the mistakes made in the name of love, and the promise of redemption— all beautifully told by acclaimed author Kristin Hannah.—*Amazon.com*

April 27, 2017: Pete Hamill, *Forever: A Novel*

[Available in sufficient quantities in all formats. Beware of book of same name with different author.] Review: This novel demands that the reader immediately

suspend disbelief, but if this summons is heeded the reward will be a superior tale told by Hamill (Snow in August; A Drinking Life) in the cadence of the master storyteller. The year is 1741 and this is the story of Cormac O'Connor-"Irish, and a Jew"-who grows up in Ireland under English Protestant rule and is secretly schooled in Gaelic religion, myth and language. Seeking to avenge the murder of his father by the Earl of Warren, he follows the trail of the earl to New York City. On board ship, Cormac befriends African slave Kongo, and once in New York, the two join a rebellion against the British. After the rising is quelled, mobs take to the streets and Kongo is seized. Cormac saves Kongo from death, but is shot in the process. His recovery takes a miraculous turn when Kongo's dead priestess, Tomora, appears and grants Cormac eternal life and youth-so long as he never leaves the island of Manhattan, thus the "Forever" of the title. What follows is a portrait of the "city of memory of which Cormac was the only citizen." Cormac fights in the American Revolution, sups with Boss Tweed (in a very sympathetic portrait) and lives into the New York of 2001. In that year he warily falls in love with Delfina, a streetwise Dominican ("That was the curse attached to the gift: You buried everyone you loved"), and comes into contact with a descendant of the Earl of Warren, the newspaper publisher Willie Warren. His love, his drive for revenge and his very desire to exist are fatefully challenged on the eve and the day of September 11. This rousing, ambitious work is beautifully woven around historical events and characters, but it is Hamill's passionate pursuit of justice and compassion-Celtic in foundation-that distinguishes this tale of New York City and its myriad peoples. *Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc.*

May 25, 2017: Tatiana de Rosnay, *A Secret Kept*

[Available in sufficient quantities in all formats.] Review: The long-delayed resolution of a French family's mystery electrifies de Rosnay's (Sarah's Key) glimpse at the crushing cost of keeping secrets. Parisian architect Antoine Rey and his sister, Mélanie, celebrate her 40th birthday on the island where they vacationed as children with their mother, until she died there in 1974. Upon returning, Mélanie is gripped by a shocking repressed memory and loses control of the car. After a brief spell of amnesia, she tells her brother what it was she remembered: their mother had been in love with a woman. As a skeptical Antoine investigates this twist in their mother's past, an upsetting chain of events unfurls: his daughter's best friend drops dead of a heart condition at only 14 years of age; his teenage son is arrested; and he learns that his father is dying of cancer. Antoine gets support in his quest from a new lover, a Harley-riding mortician who teaches him how respecting death helps one to embrace life. This perceptive portrait of a middle-aged man's delayed coming-of-age rates as a seductive, suspenseful, and très formidable keeper. —*Publishers Weekly*, Copyright © Reed Business Information

June 29, 2017: TBA

SUGGESTED READING [Books that didn't make the cut because of lack of sufficient copies.]

Suzanne M. Wolfe, *Unveiling: A Novel* [only one copy on Bibliomation]

Wolfe's *Unveiling* is about Rachel Piers, an art restorer who takes a job in Italy to work on a mysterious panel about the Crucifixion. Rachel is recently divorced from a dilettante who abused her soul much as her stepfather once abused her body. She's a wounded spirit, disengaged from life, though still obsessive about her work. She meets her Italian equivalent in Donati, a gentle man with whom she strips away centuries of varnish and weathering from their assigned masterpiece. In the process both strip away their own hurts and longings, finding love as well as spiritual ballast in a quiet, subtle love story deeply grounded in the restoration of art. --John Mort, *Booklist* [Starred review from the American Library Association]

Chris Bojhalian, *Midwives* [no copies on Bibliomation]

[Oprah's Book Club selection. Review: The time is 1981, and Sibyl Danforth has been a dedicated midwife in the rural community of Reddington, Vermont, for fifteen years. But one treacherous winter night, in a house isolated by icy roads and failed telephone lines, Sibyl takes desperate measures to save a baby's life. She performs an emergency Caesarean section on its mother, who appears to have died in labor. But what if--as Sibyl's assistant later charges--the patient wasn't already dead, and it was Sibyl who inadvertently killed her? --Amazon.com

Laila Ibrahim, *Yellow Crocus* [Not available in sufficient quantities.]

Moments after Lisbeth is born, she's taken from her mother and handed over to an enslaved wet nurse, Mattie, a young mother separated from her own infant son in order to care for her tiny charge. Thus begins an intense relationship that will shape both of their lives for decades to come. This deeply moving tale of unlikely love traces the journey of these very different women as each searches for freedom and dignity.

Roya Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No* [no large print edition exists]

Nonfiction/autobiography. A young Jewish school girl is growing up in Tehran, Iran when the Shah is overthrown and a Muslim theocracy begins applying constricting regulations not only on the minority populations, such as Jews and Kurds, but also on the women and girls of all faiths. Sometimes funny and endearing, sometimes frightening, Hakakian's journey through revolution and adolescence is well told. --reviewed by M.E. Lang